

## CLAIMS

1. A tray, which comprises:

5 a base and a sidewall extending from said base which sidewall terminates in a free edge, said base and sidewall defining an interior cavity, said free edge defining a tray opening, said cavity adapted to receive food, said base adapted to be placed in an upstanding position, said base having a raised button extending into said cavity for stabilizing the center of gravity of said base when said base is placed in an upstanding position when said cavity is filled with food.

2. The tray of claim 1, wherein said sidewall has a flat area upon which said tray 10 can be placed in an upstanding position.

3. The tray of claim 1, which is surrounded by a sleeve.

4. 15 The tray of claim 3, wherein said sleeve includes a front panel having a display surface and being adjacent to said tray opening and a rear panel adjacent to the base, said sleeve adjacent to said base extending outwardly to form a leg upon which said sleeve and tray can be upstandingly placed.

5. 20 The tray of claim 1, wherein at least one food pouch is contained in said cavity and said tray opening is covered with a cover.

6. 25 The tray of claim 5, wherein said cover is one or more of a polymeric film or a sleeve that surrounds said tray.

7. 30 The tray of claim 3, wherein said free edge terminates with a flange that extends generally perpendicularly from said sidewall and said sleeve contains slots adapted to receive a portion of said flange for said base to retain said sleeve

8. 35 The tray of claim 6, wherein said free edge terminates with a flange to which said polymeric film is releasably adhesively secured.

9. 40 The tray of claim 8, wherein said tray opening is covered by said polymeric film and is surrounded by said sleeve.

10. 45 A microwavable food packaging system, which comprises:

(a) a tray including a base and a sidewall extending from said base which sidewall terminates in a free edge, said base and sidewall defining an interior cavity, said free edge defining a tray opening, said base having a raised button extending into said cavity; and

5 (b) a sleeve surrounding said tray, said sleeve including a front panel having a display surface and being adjacent to said tray opening and a rear panel adjacent to the base, said sleeve adjacent to said base extending outwardly to form a leg upon which said sleeve and tray can be upstandingly placed,

10 whereby said base is adapted to receive food pouches within said cavity, said raised button stabilizing the center of gravity of said food packaging system when said food packaging system is placed in an upstanding position on said leg.

11. The microwavable food packaging system of claim 10, wherein said sidewall carries a pair of handles disposed oppositely to each other which handles extend inwardly into said cavity to further stabilize said center of gravity when said cavity receives food pouches therewithin.

12. The microwavable food packaging system of claim 10, wherein said sidewall free edge terminates with a flange that extends generally perpendicularly from said sidewall.

13. The microwavable food packaging system of claim 12, wherein said sleeve contains slots adapted to receive a portion of said flange for said tray to retain said sleeve.

14. The microwavable food packaging system of claim 13, wherein a polymeric film extends over said tray opening and is removably adhesively secured to said flange.

15. The microwavable food packaging system of claim 10, wherein said sleeve has a proximal edge that extends from said base, and wherein said sleeve also has a distal edge that is folded outwardly from said sidewall to meet and mate with said proximal edge to form said leg.

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16. The microwavable food packaging system of claim 14, wherein said sleeve has a proximal edge that extends from said base, and wherein said sleeve also has a distal edge that is folded outwardly from said sidewall to meet and mate with said proximal edge to form said leg.

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17. The microwavable food packaging system of claim 14, wherein a plurality of stacked trays is surrounded by said sleeve.

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18. A microwavable meal kit and food packaging system, which comprises:

(a) a tray including a base and a sidewall extending from said base which sidewall terminates in a free edge, said base and sidewall defining an interior cavity, said free edge defining a tray opening, said base having a raised button extending into said cavity;

(b) at least one food pouch disposed in said cavity; and

15 (c) a sleeve surrounding said tray, said sleeve including a front panel having a display surface and being adjacent to said tray opening and a rear panel adjacent to the base, said sleeve adjacent to said base extending outwardly to form a leg upon which said sleeve and tray can be upstandingly placed,

20 whereby said raised button stabilizes the center of gravity of said meal kit and food packaging system when said food packaging system is placed in an upstanding position on said leg.

19. The microwavable meal kit and food packaging system of claim 18, wherein said sidewall carries a pair of handles disposed oppositely to each other which handles extend inwardly into said cavity to further stabilize said center of gravity when said cavity receives food pouches therewithin.

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20. The microwavable food packaging system of claim 18, wherein said sidewall free edge terminates with a flange that extends generally perpendicularly from said sidewall.

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21. The microwavable food packaging system of claim 20, wherein said sleeve contains slots adapted to receive a portion of said flange for said tray to retain said sleeve.

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22. The microwavable meal kit and food packaging system of claim 21, wherein a polymeric film extends over said tray opening and is removably adhesively secured to said flange.

5 23. The microwavable meal kit and food packaging system of claim 18, wherein said sleeve has a proximal edge that extends from said base, and wherein said sleeve also has a distal edge that is folded outwardly from said sidewall to meet and mate with said proximal edge to form said leg.

10, 24. The microwavable meal kit and food packaging system of claim 19, wherein said free edge terminates with a flange that extends generally perpendicularly from said sidewall, wherein a polymeric film extends over said tray opening and is removably adhesively secured to said flange.

15 25. The microwavable meal kit and food packaging system of claim 24, wherein said sleeve contains slots adapted to receive a portion of said flange for said tray to retain said sleeve.

20, 26. The microwavable meal kit and food packaging system of claim 25, wherein said sleeve has a proximal edge that extends from said base, and wherein said sleeve also has a distal edge that is folded outwardly from said sidewall to meet and mate with said proximal edge to form said leg.

25 27. The microwavable meal kit and food packaging system of claim 22, wherein a plurality of stacked trays is surrounded by said sleeve.

28. A microwavable food packaging system, which comprises: a tray including a base and a sidewall extending from said base which sidewall terminates in a free edge, said base and sidewall defining an interior cavity, said free edge defining a tray opening, said base having a raised button extending into said cavity, said sidewall having a substantially flat sidewall portion adapted so that said tray can be placed in an upstanding position thereon, whereby said base is adapted to receive food pouches within said cavity, said raised button stabilizing the center of gravity of said food packaging system when said food packaging system is placed in an upstanding position on said sidewall flat portion.

22 29. The microwavable food packaging system of claim 28, wherein said sidewall carries a pair of handles disposed oppositely to each other which handles extend inwardly into said cavity to further stabilize said center of gravity when said cavity receives food pouches therewithin.

28 30. The microwavable food packaging system of claim 28, wherein said sidewall free edge terminates with a flange that extends generally perpendicularly from said sidewall.

10 31. The microwavable food packaging system of claim 30, wherein a polymeric film extends over said tray opening and is removably adhesively secured to said flange.

29 32. The microwavable food packaging system of claim 28, wherein a sleeve surrounds said tray, said sleeve including a front panel having a display surface and being adjacent to said tray opening.

31 33. The microwavable food packaging system of claim 32, wherein said sleeve has a sleeve flat portion that covers said sidewall flat portion.

20 34. The microwavable food packaging system of claim 33, wherein a plurality of stacked trays is surrounded by said sleeve.

33 25 35. The microwavable food packaging system of claim 32, wherein at least one food pouch is disposed in said cavity.

34 36. The microwavable food packaging system of claim 32, wherein said tray is made from a microwave transparent polymer

30 37. The microwavable food packaging system of claim 32, wherein a sleeve surrounds said tray, said sleeve including a front panel having a display surface and being adjacent to said tray opening, said sleeve also containing slots adapted to receive said portions of said flange for said tray to retain said sleeve.

38. A method for making a microwavable food packaging system that is stable when stood in an upright position, which comprises:

5 (a) providing a tray that includes a base and a sidewall extending from said base which sidewall terminates in a free edge, said base and sidewall defining an interior cavity, said free edge defining a tray opening, said base having a raised button extending into said cavity;

10 (b) placing at least one food pouch containing food within said cavity; and

15 (c) providing a sleeve surrounding said tray, said sleeve including a front panel having a display surface and being adjacent to said tray opening and a rear panel adjacent to the base, said sleeve adjacent to said base extending outwardly to form a leg upon which said sleeve and tray can be upstandingly placed,

whereby said raised button stabilizes the center of gravity of said food packaging system when said food packaging system is placed in an upstanding position on said leg.

15 39. The method of claim 38, wherein said sidewall is provided as carrying a pair of handles disposed oppositely to each other which handles extend inwardly into said cavity to further stabilize said center of gravity.

20 40. The method of claim 38, wherein said sidewall free edge is provided as terminating with a flange that extends generally perpendicularly from said sidewall.

25 41. The method of claim 38, wherein sleeve contains slots adapted to receive portions of said flange for said tray to retain said sleeve.

30 42. The method of claim 41, wherein a polymeric film is provided as extending over said tray opening and is removably adhesively secured to said flange.

43. The method of claim 38, wherein said sleeve is provided as having a proximal edge that extends from said base, and wherein said sleeve also has a distal edge that is folded outwardly from said sidewall to meet and mate with said proximal edge to form said leg.

44. The method of claim 43, wherein said sleeve is provided as having a proximal edge that extends from said base, and wherein said sleeve also has a distal edge that is folded outwardly from said sidewall to meet and mate with said proximal edge to form said leg.
45. The method of claim 40, wherein a plurality of stacked trays is provided surrounded by said sleeve.
46. The method of claim 40, wherein:
  - (d) said polymeric film is removed from said tray;
  - (e) said food in said at least one food pouch is poured into said tray;
  - (f) said removed polymeric film is placed over said tray opening; and
  - (g) said tray is placed in a microwave for heating of the food in said tray, said removed polymeric film for retarding splatters during heating.